Glossary

Action Step
Steps required to successfully implement an intervention activity.

Example: If an intervention activity is to develop and implement a work experience program for students to explore the profession of veterinary technician, one of the action steps could be to contact the local veterinary hospital to meet and discuss setting up work experiences for students.

Baseline
Level of performance at the "start" of data collection. The baseline is a "line in the sand", which can be used to measure change of important performance indicators for future reference. When baseline data is compared with data collected at later points in the educational process decisions can be made as to whether students are making adequate progress.

Empirical Research
Research that bases its findings on direct or indirect observation of reality. Empirical research seeks systematic information about something that can be observed in the outside world or in a laboratory.

Evaluation
Organized way of measuring work in progress and results obtained.

Fidelity of Implementation
Implementation as intended and thus the maintenance of integrity as specified or designed, i.e. the activity or program has been implemented as it was supposed to be and not altered by the implementer(s).

Hypothesis
Assertion or "educated guess" that posits a relationship of some type that exists between two or more phenomena.

Intermediate Target
Interim target. Intermediate targets and target indicators should be measured in the same way. Intermediate targets are often performance levels that are expected to be achieved on the way to the target, often with specific achievement dates.

Intervention
Means the same as "strategy"—an intervention strategy should be based on research that has demonstrated its effectiveness. Sometimes also referred to as "scientifically-based interventions."

Objective
Statement that describes the specific, measurable results to be achieved by whom, by when and by how much or to what degree. Objectives must be measurable and should relate to student performance and/or systems outcomes. They must also specify a final target and the specific date of when that target is to be met. Objectives can break down a goal to specific student populations that need improvement in order to meet the goal and by when. Objectives should relate to and support a district goal.

Outcome Evaluation
Evaluates the extent to which the goals of the strategy have been met and primarily focus on the effects of the intervention.

Peer-Reviewed
Process of subjecting scholarly work or ideas to the scrutiny of others who are experts in the field. The peer review process is aimed at getting authors to meet the standards of their discipline.

Professional and Technical Services
Supports that can be performed only by persons with specialized skills and knowledge.

Quasi-Experimental Design
Resembles experimental design, but lacks key elements such as pre and post testing and/or control groups.

Reliability

Extent to which a measurement will yield the same results across time (test-retest reliability) or if measured by alternate forms of the same assessment instrument (alternate form reliability). Reliability indices range from 0.00 (total unreliability) to 1.00 (perfect reliability). In order to be used in educational decision-making a test should have a reliability of .90 or higher.

Research-Based

Activity or intervention meets the criteria developed by the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse (www.whatworks.ed.gov) for a research-based activity or intervention. The research on the activity in question involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs.

Strategy

Means the same as an intervention—often is described as an "intervention activity." It represents a measurable strategy that describes how the objective will be accomplished.

Example: Develop and implement a work experience program.

Strategy-Impact Measure

Performance measure used several times over the school year to assess progress or change in student performance or teacher practice.

Example: After implementation of Reading First in the district's Kindergarten through 3rd grade Communication Arts classrooms, teachers administer DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), a standardized, individually administered assessment instrument, at the beginning, middle and end of the school year to measure student progress in each of the four grades.

Sustainability

Manner in which programs will be able to carry-on activities that prove to be effective once initial funding and support is no longer available.

Target

Desired level of performance to be reached. A target is usually the criterion (long-term) level of desired performance. Often the target level is a part of the performance indicator (e.g., % of students with disabilities completing school will be comparable to that of students without disabilities). The same target level may imply different amounts of change for different groups.

Trend

Past and present performance of an individual or group as measured over some time period. Trend data can be used to project the future performance of an individual or group of individuals with and without the implementation of some objective.

Triangulation

Practice of comparing results from different sets of data that are designed to measure the same construct but are collected from different sources and/or by different methods to increase certainty about the validity of the construct.

Validity

Extent to which a test measures what its developers or users claim it measures. There are a number of different types of validity the most important being criterion-related validity or the extent to which a person's score on a criterion measure can be estimated from that person's test score.